

675 9A-78 10
Charity better than Knowledge:

A
S E R M O N

Preached at the
V I S I T A T I O N

HELD AT
LACOCK IN *WILTSHIRE*.

May 23. 1760.

By JOHN SCROPE, D.D.

Of *Oriel College*, *K*

Rector of *Castle-Combe*, and Vicar of *Kington*
St. Michael's in the Diocese of *Sarum*.

Published at the Request of the Clergy, and
other Gentlemen who heard it.

O X F O R D,

Printed at the THEATRE; Sold by J. FLETCHER, and
D. PRINCE in *Oxford*; and J. RAYINGTON in *St. Paul's*
Church-Yard, *London*.

2104

Imprimatur;



J. O. BROWNE,

Vice-Can. Oxon.

Junii 9^o. 1760.

By JOHN SCROPE, D.D.
Of Oriel College, and
Regent of Castle-Combe, and Vicar of Kingston
St. Andrew's in the Diocese of Exeter.

Published at the Request of the Clergy, and
other Gentlemen who heard it.

O X F O R D.

Printed at the THEATRE, by J. RICHARDSON, and
D. P. in OXFORD, and J. RICHARDSON in ST. JAMES'S
Church-yard, London.

TO THE REVEREND
DOCTOR STEBBING,

Chancellor of the Diocese of *Sarum*,

AND

Arch-Deacon of *Wilts*.

Reverend Sir,

ALTHOUGH, to our great Concern, You was not able to meet and preside over us at the last Visitation, You have a Right to be acquainted with our Proceedings. For which Reason I take the Liberty of dedicating to You a Sermon which I was desired to publish both by my Reverend Brethren, and by a Gentleman,* (one of my Hearers likewise) for whose Character and

a *James Montagu*, Esq; of *Lackham* in *Wilts*, one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace, and a Captain in the *Militia*.

Judgment

Judgment I am one of the many that
have the highest Regard and Esteem.
I am much pleased with the Honour,
but more with the Opportunity, of here-
by declaring the Veneration which I
have, not more from Duty than Con-
viction, for our excellent Church.

I am,

Reverend Sir,

KINGTON.

May 24. 1760.

Your most obedient,

humble Servant,

JOHN SCROPE.

I COR. VIII. 1.

*— Knowledge puffeth up, but Charity
edifieth.*

THE particular Occasion of these Words was a Dispute raised among the early Converts to Christianity at *Corinth*, with regard to “Meats offered to Idols.” How *they* came to be at all concerned about such Meats, the following seems to be a probable Account. Those who had embraced the Gospel of Jesus Christ still lived among Idolaters, of which Number they had formerly been themselves. These Idolaters often sacrificed to their supposed Gods; and their Sacrifices were succeeded by Feastings in their Temples, either upon some Part of the Sacrifices themselves, or upon Provisions which had been presented to the Idol by way of imploring his Blessing upon them. To these Entertainments the Christians used to be invited by their Neighbours*, either upon the Foot of old Acquaintance and Friend-

* 1 Cor. 8. 10. and 10. 27.

ship, which they still desired to maintain tho' the others had left their Religion; or out of Curiosity, to know *why* they had left it, and how this Conduct had answered to them; or perhaps, with a View to tempt them, and endeavour to bring them back again. But, whatever the Motives of those who gave the Invitation might be, the Persons invited were very much divided about accepting it. Some, who were perfectly acquainted with their Christian Liberty, knew there was no Harm in complying; nay, they might reasonably think such Compliance would be attended with very good Consequences, as giving an Opportunity by social Intercourse and familiar Conversation to reconcile and bring over the rest of the *Corinthians* to that most true Persuasion which they had embraced themselves. But others, who were not so well instructed in the Liberty of the Gospel, dreaded and abhorred that Compliance, and were extremely offended at those who practised it. Now here in what way does the Apostle proceed, and how does he decide the Matter? Not by peremptorily enjoining that the less knowing should be obliged to submit to those who knew better, tho' to *human* Wisdom this would have appeared not only no unjust,

unjust, but even an equitable Determination. But in the present Circumstances, while the Christian Religion was in its Infancy, this Method was not expedient. It is upon the very same Occasion that St. *Paul* says in a following Chapter, "All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not^a." The Apostle therefore goes upon these higher, nobler, *Christian*, Principles. He allows the more confirmed Converts all their superiour Merit. "We know that We all have Knowledge^b." But notwithstanding this Advantage, he directs the Persons possess of it to decline making the utmost Use of it, or going those Lengths in which it would certainly bear them out; and rather, to humour the Prejudices of their sincere, tho' weak and uninformed, Brethren. He exhorts them to that Humility and Charity for which he was so eminent himself, and the being endued with which he preferred to his Possession of all human and divine Accomplishments. And justly, since he says, "Knowledge puffeth up, but Charity edifieth."

After an Introduction which I fear may be thought tedious, I shall leave the particular Occasion upon which the Words were first

a 1 Cor. 10. 23.

b 1 Cor. 8. 1.

written, and in the rest of this Discourse draw from them some general Observations on *Knowledge* and *Charity*, with an Application to some later and more modern Subjects and Controversies.

It is the Apostle's Censure of "Knowledge," that it "puffeth up." This Effect exactly corresponds with the Argument made Use of to induce our first Parent to eat of the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and the Suggestion of her own Mind upon the Sight of it; "Ye shall be as Gods" — and, it was "a Tree to be desired to make one wise." Thus was Ambition the Cause of Knowledge, and Pride is the Effect of it: an Account of the

a *Gen.* 3. 5, 6. I humbly apprehend that the latter of these Verses (of which it is not disputed but our Translation is the true one) plainly leads us to understand by "the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil," (c. 2. 9.) a Tree conveying such Knowledge, according to the Letter of the Original. If so, the Rendering of the last Passage needs not be changed to "the Tree which was to be the Test of Good and Evil," according to the most new and ingenious (but still conjectural) Interpretation of the Reverend and learned Mr *Kennicot*, in the former of his two Dissertations. How any Tree should be capable of producing so remarkable a Fruit as this Knowledge, is another Question; and all the Objections and Enquiries about it I look upon to be nothing to the Purpose. All I know is, that if God has declared so, we are bound to believe it. The "Tree of Life" must be literally understood.

Matter,

Matter, which tends to discourage such as are very eagerly applying themselves to the Acquisition of Knowledge, and to mortify such as have, in reality, already made a great Progress in it, and may flatter themselves that they have made a much greater. And yet the Apostle must be allowed to mean Knowledge of a *good* Sort. For such it certainly is, to have acquired due Notions of the Gospel-Dispensation, more particularly with regard to the Extensiveness of that "Liberty wherewith "Christ has made us free," breaking the servile Chains of Superstition and Timidity.

But it is not the Way of the Scriptures to mention an Inconveniency without proposing a Remedy. Accordingly, the Apostle prescribes one in the next Words. For if "Knowledge puffeth up, Charity edifieth," that is, instructs *without* "puffing up:" agreeably to the same Apostle's Character of it, "Charity," (that is, the charitable Person) "is not puffed up". The Nature of this *Charity*, and of the *Edification* produced by it, must have a particular Consideration.

To pretend to define *Charity* would be attempting to comprise all the particular Virtues in a single Definition. For *Charity* in-

a 1 Cor. 13. 4.

cludes

cludes them all. It is a Foundation strong and ample enough to support the whole Fa-
 brick of the Christian Religion, for which it
 must be sometimes understood. And the Name
 is as universal as the Thing signified by it. We
 may observe that St. *Paul*, who defines *Faith*
 with so much Elegance, Strength, and Pre-
 cision, never defines *Charity*. Matter so preg-
 nant mocks the Definer's Skill, and scorns to
 be confined within Bounds so narrow. If He
 be the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*,
 (as is generally agreed) he calls "Faith, the
 Substance of Things hoped for, the Evidence
 "of Things not seen ^a." This is a *Definition*.
 But *Charity* he only *describes* by an Enumera-
 tion of its Properties ^b. However, as ordinary
 Persons want some Guide, that we may avoid
 Confusion, and collect the scattered Rays into
 one Point in order to a clearer View of the
 Object, we will take the Definition of an
 eminent Divine of our own ^c, which is as
 comprehensive a one as the Case will admit.
 "Charity (*says he*) is that Affection of the
 "Mind whereby we love God for his own sake,
 "and our Neighbour, for God's sake."

^a *Heb. 11. 1.*

^b *1 Cor. 13.*

^c Dean Stanhope Epist. & Gosp. Vol. 2. p. 264.

By *Edification* we may understand Instruction in general, but chiefly that Kind of it which respects our Improvement in Religion, "Instruction in Righteousness," (as *St. Paul* says ^a) or (according to *St. Jude*) the "Building up of ourselves on our most holy Faith ^b."

But *how* does *Charity* produce this Instruction?—By making us humble and teachable it disposes us both to learn, and to apply ourselves to an all-wise Master, the true Fountain of all Knowledge; by making us patient it enables us to conquer the Difficulties we meet with in the Way; and by making us temperate and benevolent it inclines us to make the best Use of what we shall have learnt, employing it in the Regulation of our own Passions, the Service of our Fellow-Creatures, and to the Glory of Almighty God.

As this right Application of *Knowledge* is the Effect of *Charity*, so is that *Knowledge* encreas'd by such an Application. For our Saviour expressly tells us, "If a Man will do the Will of my Father, he shall know of my Doctrine whether it be of God."^c

But *whom* does *Charity* edify?—For the Text seems to leave it uncertain, and only says

^a 2 *Tim.* 3. 16. ^b *Jude.* 20. ^c *Joh.* 7. 17. abso-

absolutely, "*Charity edifieth.*" From this very Circumstance we may collect; what we shall find confirmed by Fact, that *Charity* edifies not a Man's self only, but others also. It not only furnishes the Person possess of it with the truest Instruction, but prompts him to communicate it to his *Neighbour*, in the most extended, *Christian*, Sense of this Denomination.

Thus does Christianity both give us the truest Notions of *Charity*, and set it in a Light entirely new. For it represents it as affecting and improving the *Understanding*, while it proceeds from the *Will*. According to our Religion, *Charity* is an *intellectual*, as well as a *practical* Virtue. Let the ancient moral Philosophers therefore boast of their Skill and Precision in inventing and affixing general Names to abstract Ideas; let them split the Understanding into *speculative* and *practical*; let them range some Virtues under the Head of the *practical Understanding*, others under that of the *speculative*; let them have their Cardinal Virtues; their Universal Justice; their Piety, to include all the Duties relating to God; their Probity, to express those we owe to Men. But indeed *they* do all this for Method's Sake, and very useful it is to the Learner.

Learner. Then, let the less modest *modern* Refiners talk of the Moral Sense; the Beauty of Virtue; the Fitness of Things; of Sentiment; of Systems; the Whole; and the Parts. And after all of them, let us produce St. Paul's single Term of *Charity*, which swallows up all the others by its Comprehensiveness, and extinguishes them all by its superiour Brightness. For *Charity* embraces God and Mankind, takes possession of all the Faculties of the Mind endowed with it, and extends to all Individuals of the human and every other Species.

Knowledge, as not being quite so extensive, will be found more easily and more commonly defined. To a most acute Philosopher of our own^a, and one very conversant in the Writings of St. Paul, it seems (as he modestly expresses himself) to be "the Perception of the Connection and Agreement, or Disagreement and Repugnancy of any of our Ideas."

A considerable Branch of *Knowledge* is *Learning*, which by another very eminent Author of our own both in Verse and Prose,^b

^a Mr Locke.

^b Essay on Human Understanding, B. 4. Ch. 1. §. 3.

^c Mr Pope.

is called "the Knowledge of the Sense of our
"Predecessors."

It is not my Intention to dwell upon the
Particulars of either of these Definitions, but
only to observe how naturally each of the
Things defined tends to "puff up."

That Perception of the Relation between
our Ideas which is supposed to constitute *Know-
ledge*, must likewise be supposed to be the O-
peration of our own Minds; and it is very dif-
ficult to look upon any thing as our own with-
out being "puffed up" by it. This is parti-
cularly true with regard to Advantages purely
mental and *intellectual*. For these are the most
remote from *Matter* and *outward* Objects, not
at all dependent on the Will of others, and
therefore reckoned in the Class of "Things in
"our own Power" by the Philosophers; so
that we must almost *necessarily* (and *they*
thought we might *innocently*) pride ourselves
in *them*.

^a See the general Preface to his Works. But at the same time
that I say this of Mr *Pope* I declare I think he was most unhap-
pily mistaken (to call it no worse) in the Characters of many
both of those he praised, and those he satirized. Of the former
sort (to name no more) is the late Lord *Bolingbroke*; of the lat-
ter, the great and good Mr *Addison*.

^b See *Epietus*, chap. 1.

And

And if by *Learning* we know the Sense of our Predecessors, how greatly must *our own* be augmented by this Means? Our own, which we *never* thought too little, but after this Addition shall be in great Danger of *over-valuing*.

Accordingly, it is too notorious in fact, that Persons both of Knowledge and Learning are strongly inclined to attribute all their Acquirements to their own Abilities, to “sacrifice to their Net, and burn Incense to their Drag,”^a to idolize their own Talents, and when they “have Nothing that they did *not* receive, to “glory as if they had received *Nothing*.”^b

But altho’ *Knowledge* and *Learning* be really distinct from each other, (as I have shewn) yet since there is no Difference between them in the Light wherein we are considering them, as contradistinguished to *Charity*, in my future Observations I shall use these Terms promiscuously.

One Defect of *Knowledge* is that it cannot, in this Life, be perfect, universal, or belong to every one; but *Charity* may. “Howbeit,” (says the Apostle a few Verses after the Text) “there is not in *every Man* that Knowledge.”^c According to the same Apostle, “We know” (only) “*in part*,” and even that “Part shall

^a Hab. 1. 16.

^b See 1 Cor. 4. 7.

^c 1 Cor. 8. 7.

"vanish, and be done away." But "Charity
 "never faileth."^a

The most valuable Kind of *Knowledge* is that of the Holy Scriptures, which contain the truest Accounts of the Nature of God, and of our own Souls; the History of his Providence; the Rules of our Duty to Him, our Neighbour, and Ourselves. And yet this very *Knowledge*, excellent as it is, may be deficient in some necessary Points; namely, a true Principle, and Purpose to apply it aright, that is, *Charity*. In these Circumstances St. *Paul* utterly condemns even *this Knowledge*. "Tho' "I understand all Mysteries and all Know-
 "ledge, and have not *Charity*, it profiteth me
 "nothing."^b Therefore *Charity* must be better than *Knowledge*.

And in general, the more *learned* or *know-
 ing* a Man is, the more *Charity* he has Occasion for, to keep him from being elated in his own Mind, and to render him useful and agreeable to other People. Without a due Proportion of *Charity*, superiour *Knowledge* only makes a Man pedantick, arrogant, and insolent: a sort of *Knowledge*, to which *Ignorance* itself, if unaffected, is infinitely preferable. For of the two Characters, a Scholar with-

^a 1 Cor. 13. 8, 9, 10.

^b 1 Cor. 13. 2, 3.

out *Charity*, or a plain Man with it, the latter would certainly be rather aspired to by a laudable Ambition; especially, as the very best sort of *Knowledge* is inseparably annexed to *Charity*, which “edifieth.” But whatever a Man that is deficient in *Charity*, may “think that he knoweth,” (if we will believe *St. Paul*) “he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.” Yet? When will he? The Moment he becomes *charitable*.

Nearly related to *Knowledge* is *Genius*, with which I am little farther acquainted than to know that it pretends to be absolutely independent of *Learning*, and unindebted to it. But since what generally passes for such is a busy, turbulent Thing in which *Imagination* has the greatest Share, it comes under the same Observations that have been made upon *Knowledge* and *Learning*.

But if *real Learning* and *true Knowledge* be such worthless Endowments when unaccompanied with *Charity*, what shall we say to the mere *Pretences* to them? It is a Merit even not to know those Things whose Value and Use do not recommend them to our Knowledge. And therefore does specious Ignorance, do “Oppositions of Science falsely so called,”

1 Cor. 8. 2.

1 Tim. 6. 20.

do

do "Philosophy and vain Deceit,"* do "the
 "enticing Words of *Man's* Wisdom,"^b deserve
 our Censure, or so much as our Notice? Per-
 haps not. But since we are directed by St.
Peter to "be ready to give every Man a Rea-
 son of the Hope that is in us,"^c since this
 Apostle, and even Christ himself condescends
 to argue with the Unbelieving and Mistaken,
 since We of the Clergy were ordained not only
 Messengers and Stewards, but *Watchmen* of the
 Lord;^d I shall take Leave to trespass still far-
 ther upon your Patience, while I make a few
 Remarks on some prevailing Opinions, and
 modern Writings, as a kind of Application of
 the foregoing Observations.

It was a Notion long since broached by
 some Enthusiasts, that *human* Learning is not
 necessary to a *Christian*; that it is of no Ser-
 vice towards understanding the Scriptures;
 nay, that it obstructs and even excludes the
 Influence, or Operation of *Grace*.^e How
 strange soever this Notion may seem at first
 Sight, it is no hard Matter to guess at it's O-
 riginal. For the Ringleaders of certain Sects
 being conscious that they had both misinter-

a Col. 2. 8. b 1 Cor. 2. 4. c 1 Pet. 3. 15.
 d See the Form of ordaining *Priests*. e The *Anabap-*
tists in *Germany* were for destroying all Books besides the Bible.
 preted

preted and misapplied the Words of Scripture,
 and contradicted the Sense and Practice not
 only of the primitive Church, but likewise of
 all learned Men, were in the right to decry
 the Instrument by which their Fraud and
 Knavery would have been detected. And the
 Art of their Successors, joined to the Weak-
 ness of their miserably deluded Followers,
 propagated and still maintains the same Error.
 I think Nothing that I have said in this Dis-
 course can be construed in favour of such an
 Opinion; an Opinion, which as it is unneces-
 sary to us, so in us would be extremely un-
 grateful. The Church of *England* appeals to
 the Scriptures, appeals to the Fathers, to the
 first and purest Ages of Christianity, to sober
 Criticism, to rational Learning; and challen-
 ges her Adversaries to shew from all these
 wherein her Doctrines are erroneous, or con-
 trary to "the Analogy of Faith."^a And can
 we forget those "Schools of the Prophets,"^b
 those happy Retirements where we confirmed,
 and were taught to defend, the Principles of
 Virtue and Religion which we had before im-
 bibed? If we *can*, I could almost venture to
 pronounce that whatever Learning we may

^a *Rom.* 12. 6.
 ges of Scripture,

^b *1 Sam.* 19. 20. and many other Passa-

have

have brought from thence, it will do us no Good. This is indeed a *Knowledge* which I may and must condemn. For it is unmixed with *Charity*, of which *Gratitude* is a main Ingredient.

After an Education whereof the principal Parts are supposed to be the Study of Morality, the best kind of Philosophy, Divinity, and the Scriptures ; I confess, we might expect to see Controversies, *religious* ones especially, better managed, and conducted with greater Temper. But perhaps the Education has been imperfect, and by reason of too late an Application some usual and necessary Part of it omitted, It is no uncommon Thing now-a-days for a Person to apply himself to the Study of *one* Profession, and on finding his Genius or Inclination unfavourable towards it, to remove into *another*. This is a very material Circumstance, and may be of great Use to us in accounting for such a Man's Conduct and Character. He may have been long enough at the former Study of a learned and noble Profession to have attained the *worst* Part of it, and have come to the other too late for a very *good* Part of it. For instance ; let us figure to ourselves an Author ingenious indeed, and of some Learning ; but arrogant, overbearing,

bearing, and insolent to those who presume to differ from him, in the highest Degree. Imagine this Writer treating with Rudeness and Contempt Men vastly his Superiors in some Particulars (if not in all); Men respectable for their Learning; for a Life spent in defending that Church, of which they are now Dignitaries; for their Age; (which last Circumstance prevents us at present from seeing a Superiour posselt of all the former Virtues and Advantages). The Man, you will say, has Talents, and is not void of Learning; but he wants Modesty, he wants Humility, Meekness, Goodbreeding, and a few more Moral Virtues. True; and these Defects may be accounted for in the following Manner. This Creature of Imagination, whom we have indulged ourselves in dressing up by way of Illustration, was absent probably when the Lectures on those Virtues were read; he went too late for the *Ethical Class*. The Consequence of this was, that while he retained the Humour for disputing, and the Petulancy, acquired under his first *Master*, he learnt no Morality from his second *Tutor*. And then, having learnt none, how could he shew any? Write he must; Genius, Imagination, Invention, a Degree of Learning, all push him upon it.

C

But

But then he must write from the Stock he possesses, out of which, you have seen, Morality was unhappily excluded. A Failure in the Foundation is inevitably succeeded by a Weakness in the Superstructure. If "a House is built on the Sand, its Fall *will be as certain as great.*"^a If "a Man begins to build, and is not able to finish, all that behold it *will assuredly mock him ;*"^b especially, if he behaves as *haughtily* afterwards as he acted *foolishly* at first. — Since all Pieces, even those of Imagination, should have their *Morals*, two Lessons may be derived from the Picture I have been drawing: the first, that Arrogance and Insolence destroy all the Merit of a Writer, how great soever it would otherwise have been; the second, that all Parents and Guardians should avoid giving their Children and Wards (for *they* will avoid it of themselves who are come to Years of *Discretion*) a *mixt* Education, having heterogeneous Particles in it; I mean, that which begins in one Profession, and ends in another.

And now let me ask; does the foregoing Character bear the least Likeness to the meek and humble *Jesus*? Can you trace in it any of the Features of *St. Paul*, or *St. James*,

^a *Mat.* 7. 26, 27.

^b *Luke* 14. 28 — 30.

or St. *John*, or either of the Apostles? Is it like the primitive Christians? — Alas! not one of them. And yet such Men as I have described shall be called *great*, and perhaps, the *greatest* Men: whereas they are indeed the *least* and *lowest* of *all* Men. I am sure they are the farthest removed from “little Children,” the Resemblers of whom our Saviour pronounces “the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Charity should be aimed at in *all* Disputes, but in *religious* Disputes it is essentially necessary. The last Character was designed to represent those who chiefly want that Branch of this Virtue, the Love of their *Brethren*. But you will remember that *Charity* is the Love of *God* too. And *this* Branch of it must no more be wanting in religious Disputes than the other. Indeed, all Disputes about Religion should, I think, be held under certain Limitations. There should be some fixed Boundaries, some Land-marks not to be removed. These might be varied according to the Profession of the Disputants. If Heathens, both Parties should acknowledge not only the Existence of a Deity, but his Providence. If Christians, to these Concessions ought to be

^a Mat. 18. 4.

superadded those of “a Trinity of Persons in
 “the Unity of the Godhead;” “the Priority
 “of the Father, the first Person in that Tri-
 “nity;” “the Incarnation of the second Per-
 “son in it, Jesus Christ, the Son of Man,”^a
 and “God blessed for ever;”^b “the Divinity
 “and Personality of the holy Ghost;” “the
 “Divine Inspiration of the holy Scriptures;”
 “the Passion, and Death of Christ;” “his
 “Resurrection, and our own consequent upon
 “it.” More Articles might be added, but not
 one of *these* should be once called in question
 by Christians disputing about Religion. I am
 not afraid of being thought too large in my
 Demands by this Audience. If any Body else
 tells me, that at this rate I shall leave no re-
 ligious Subject worth disputing upon; I shall
 answer, ’tis the very Thing I desire: because
 I believe Disputes about these Matters *never*
 did any Good. At least, I am sure they are
 altogether unnecessary *now*, since all these
 Points have been proved beyond all reasonable
 Contradiction. And shall we never be wiser?
 Shall we always be doubting? —But indeed if
 there are yet any Doubters of these Truths, I
 dare affirm that they are among pretended
 Scholars, not among simple, downright Chris-

^a *Mat.* 16. 13 — 16.

^b *Rom.* 9. 5.

tians. It is impossible that *these* should be Scepticks. Let us single out one of the above Articles, "the Divinity of Christ." Now the most vulgar and illiterate Christian needs not, cannot, have his Belief of this Point shaken by the most subtle and deeply read Unbeliever, while with one plain, short Text ("in him *--dwelleth--* all the *Fullness--* of the *Godhead--* *"bodily"* *) he may drive his Adversary into that Labyrinth of Distinctions and Prevarications, out of which he will never be able fairly to extricate himself. It is no wonder therefore that our Infidels bend great Part of their Endeavours to disprove the Divine Authority of the Scriptures: An Endeavour, in which as it is certain they can never succeed, so I am afraid it is a Truth of which they can never be convinced. For this is one of the Axioms before laid down. And how is any Axiom to be *proved*? Those of *Euclid* may be *illustrated* and *unfolded* by an Application to particular Problems and Theorems, but cannot be *proved*, because there is no *Medium* to do it by, plainer than themselves. They must therefore be taken for granted. In like Manner, we (still supposing that we are *Christians*) must be persuaded of the *Divinity* of the

a Col. 2. 9.

Scrip-

Scriptures before we sit down to read them, And then the *particular* Books and Passages, as we read them, will, by the Grace of the holy Spirit which dictated them, approve themselves Divine to our Understandings, and throw a Light upon the Maxim that asserts their Divinity *in general*. And let those who will take Nothing for granted, but insist upon every Thing's being proved, consider that Mathematicians have their Axioms and *Postulata*, and other Sciences their *præcognita* and *præconcessa*. Why then must not the principal of all Sciences have the same? And so it has; with this only Difference, that as *there* they cannot be disputed without *Folly*, so they cannot *here* without both *Folly* and *Impiety*. The great Master of Reasoning whose Definition of *Knowledge* I before produced, believed that Morality was capable of Demonstration.^a But then he must have had his last Result of self-evident Propositions. I dare only hint at the Divine and Apostolical Philosopher's "Demonstration of the Spirit,"^b which is far more certain, but awful and sublime beyond

^a See Essay on the Human Understanding, particularly B.4. C.3. §. 18. where the Author speaks of his having no Doubt but the Measures of Right and Wrong might be made out by necessary Consequences from self-evident Propositions.

^b 1 Cor. 2. 4.

a Mortal's Conception, and an inexhaustible Source of *Meditation*, rather than a proper Subject for a popular *Discourse*.

I do not know whether I ought to trouble either you or myself with even mentioning some late Insults (monstrous indeed beyond Example, but beyond Example weak also) on our most holy Religion. One of these was given by that Ghost^a of the *Leviathan* already (to use the Words of St. *Jude*) "twice dead," and by his Answerers most effectually "plucked up by the Roots."^b I shall only observe with regard to his Denial of the separate Existence of the Soul in a future State, that to call the Soul *mortal* is equally idle and ridiculous with calling the Body *immortal*: and this posthumous Writer, however by some carest and admired, deserves to be exploded and neglected as much as the whimsical Author^c who towards the Beginning of this Century maintained in a Book by him published, that it was possible for a Man to preserve himself from dying at all. The Consequence at that

^a Lord *Bolingbroke's* Posthumous Works.

^b *Jude* 12. See the great Lord *Clarendon's* Confutation of *Hobbes's* *Leviathan*, and the Answers to Lord *Bolingbroke* by the Rev. Mr *Whalley*, Dr *Leland*, and many others.

^c *Asgil*.

Time was, the Book was ordered by the Parliament then sitting to be publickly burnt, and the Author was expelled the Honourable House of which he was a Member. ^a And how righteous, how well-judged the Sentence was, appears from hence, that we have not heard of any *Profelyte* to that noble Doctrine ever since.

Such singular and proud Extravagancies are the blessed Fruits of the specious Ignorance, the "Science falsely so called," "the Philosophy and vain Deceit," the "Wisdom of Man," before mentioned. But indeed it is no Wonder that *these* should "puff Men up," since we have seen that *Knowledge* itself will do so without *Charity*.

But there is a Set of charitable Gentlemen (for we were taught to believe the Book not the Work of a single Author) whose *free* and *candid* Spirit led them not many Years ago to propose some Alterations in our Liturgy. ^b One of their Reasons particularly speaks an *Excess* of *Charity*. It is their Concern for the *common* People, who (as they are pleased to assert) can never *understand* the Expressions in many of our Prayers, which by Length of

^a See the *English* History.
tions, &c.

^b Free and candid Disquisitions.

Time and the Changes incident to Language are become *antiquated* and *obsolete*. But did you ever hear any such Complaints among your Parishioners? —The *contrary* one, I believe, we may all have often heard, *viz*; that the Form is too *plain* and *ordinary*. To *this* Objection I shall not stay to give an Answer, since it deserves none. And yet I would not be understood to think our Liturgy a *perfect* Work. It is the Composition of *Men*, and as such, must necessarily be *imperfect*. But then these *free* and *candid* Gentlemen do not seem to have hit upon the Defect. For it is certain the Liturgy will never be *improved* by leaving out either of the Creeds; altering the Litany; inserting the Lord's Prayer less frequently; omitting or changing the Endings of those devout and spirited Collects where the Mention of Christ's Medation recurs so often. And to put Objections into the Heads of such as were free from them before, may be consistent enough with *their Freedom* and *Candour*, but is by no means reconcileable to *common Honesty*, or *Christian Charity*.

Another gentle, flowery Author^a has appeared lately, who, having some Objections (how founded, I cannot tell) to the *Mosaical*

^a "Enquiry into the Origin of Evil."

Account of the Matter, is so kind as to entertain the Publick with clearing up "the Origin of Evil" in what I dare say he fancies a much better manner. He intimates that the Notion of a *Paradisiacal* State is not peculiar to *Moses*, and puts the Bible just upon the same Foot with *Ovid's Metamorphoses*.^a By so doing he allows it at least to be a very pretty Tale. Now herein shall we say that he acts better, or worse, than those who represent the Scriptures, as a dull, dry Performance? But one^b before him had said, "Fables by Law established pass for Religion:" a shrewd Insinuation that all religious Establishments are Fables. In this Light at least there is no Doubt but such Gentlemen would give the Preference to that of their own Country. But *all* Establishments, the present Author says, *necessarily* hasten to their own Period and Dissolution. And indeed to prove this seems to be the principal Design of his whole Book. Accordingly, he descants very ingeniously on the Principles of Corruption, as they may be called, interwoven in all publick Constitutions. However, as to true Religion, its Decay is owing to the Fault of the Persons who ought to be governed by it, not of the Thing itself.

^a Book I. v. 89, &c.

^b *Hobbes*.

But

But he was sensible that the intimating *Revelation* to be a *Fable* would effectually confirm his Hypothesis of *Fate* and *Necessity*. For “Nothing counterfeit (as the *Roman* Orator and Philosopher^a says) can be of long Continuance.” This is something like *Gamaliel’s* Reasoning.^b And I heartily wish that the Author we are considering, (whoever he be, for he does not put his Name to his Book) was as prudent, honest, and charitable a Man as that truly learned *Pharisee* is represented.^c

But however groundless some Men’s Pretences to *Charity* may be, there can surely be no

^a *Cicero*, *Offic.* 2. 12.

^b *Acts* 5. 34. & 22. 3.

^c Between ancient and modern Unbelievers there seems to be only this Difference, that the former resemble *Virgil’s* Snake, or *Serpent*, in the old Slough, the latter the same Reptile in a new Dress :

“Qualis ubi in lucem Coluber, mala gramina pastus,

“Frigida sub terrâ tumidum quem Bruma tegebat,

“Nunc positus novus Exuviiis, nitidusque Juventâ,

“Lubrica convolvit sublato pectore terga,

“Arduus ad Solem, & linguis micat ore trifurcis.

Æn. 2. 471, 5.

“So shines, renew’d in Youth, the crested Snake,

“Who slept the Winter in a thorny Brake :

“And casting off his Slough, when Spring returns,

“Now looks aloft, and with new Glory burns :

“Restor’d with pois’nous Herbs, his ardent Sides

“Reflect the Sun, and rais’d on Spires he rides :

“High o’er the Grass, hissing he rowls along,

“And brandishes by fits his forked Tongue. *Dryden.*

Reason to suspect the Want of it in the Governours and principal Leaders of our Church, or to fear that they will not exert it on one of the most important Occasions that can call for the Exercise of this Virtue. I mean, a new Translation of the Bible, to which some great Men have publickly exprest an Inclination, and towards which indeed there seem to be some Steps and Preparations taking. I hope, I say, and am willing to persuade myself, that those who are constituted our Spiritual Heads will proceed with all the Care and Circumspection requisite in an Affair of this Nature, that affects — not the *Lives*, but — what is of infinitely greater Consequence — the *Souls* — of so many Millions; and that not only in the present, but future Ages. The Scriptures contain an Account of all the Duties, and all the Privileges of Mankind. This great Storehouse it is the Glory of the Reformation to have unlocked, and laid open to our People. And it is the indispensable Duty of their Superiours, both Ecclesiastical and Civil, to take care that they have this Treasure conveyed to them pure, and genuine; not corrupted, not embased by any unfair Mixture, or Alloy. No Change therefore should here be admitted merely for the sake of changing. For as *No-*

velty

velty is no good Reason for introducing an Interpretation, *Antiquity* is still a worse Reason for discarding one; especially, if the second Interpretation appear to favour any new Opinions tending to set aside some Article of Faith or Practice already established upon good Grounds, or to introduce others to which the present Translation cannot be made to bend. I solemnly declare that I allude here to no particular Persons, or Proceedings. God forbid that I should myself exceed the Bounds of that *Charity* which I have been recommending to others! What I say flows from a Sense of the Importance of the Business in question, and the infinite Mischief that Precipitancy and Indiscretion may here occasion. However, I must own that I cannot think a more elegant, or close, or proper Rendering of *some*, nay *many* Passages, a sufficient Reason for setting on foot a new Translation of the *Whole*. Or if such a Thing *should* be set on foot, if it should be *finished*, I hope it will not be ordered to be publicly used and read in Churches, so as to supersede the present Translation, 'till after most mature Deliberation, anxious Discussion, diligent Comparison, and faithful Representation. We have at this Time two Translations of the *Psalms*. Every one that
is

is but moderately acquainted with the *Hebrew* Language and Idiom knows that there are a great many Passages rendered more agreeably to *them* in the Translation bound up with our Bibles, than in that we have in our Common-Prayer-Books. And yet the Predecessors of our Spiritual Fathers appointed the *latter* to be read in the daily, publick, Service of the Church, as it continues to be 'till now. But why? Because this Translation, tho' not so nicely accurate, so minutely just to the Original, as the other, is yet more plain, more popular, and so more likely to edify, and be useful to, *common* Christians. Now let it be from hence particularly observed, carefully remembered, and honestly confest by *all*, but *especially* those who unhappily dissent from us, (if any such hear me at present, or if what I am saying should ever come to their Notice) that the Church of *England* prefers *Charity* to *Knowledge* understood in the very best Sense. By so doing she proves herself (as she does indeed by *all* her *Doctrines*) truly primitive, and Apostolical. Let it be the Care of all her Sons in their several Stations, Degrees, and Professions, to imitate this best of Mothers. Let the unlearned be teachable and submissive. And that they may be so, let the learned be "apt to
"teach,"

“teach,”^a and “willing to communicate”^b out of this their Treasure. Let them apply to the Languages, and “search the Scriptures”^c in the Original; but let them do it with as ready a Disposition to confirm, as to reverse, former Translations. Above all, let not a licentious Spirit of *Criticism*, (*useful* under proper *Limitations*, but very *dangerous* in the *Extreme*) let it not prevail over our *Charity*. Let *Charity* be the Scope, the Center of all our Studies, all our Pursuits, all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions upon Earth, and then we may rest assured that we shall be admitted to Mansions as lasting as *Charity* itself, that is, eternal, in the Heavens, thro’ Jesus Christ our only Lord and Saviour. To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all Praise, Might, Honour, Majesty and Dominion, now and for ever. *Amen.*

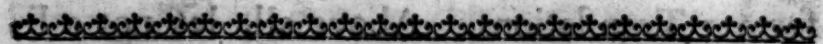
a 1 Tim. 3. 2.

b 1 Tim. 6. 18.

c Job. 6. 39.

F I N I S.

"teach," and "willing to communicate"
 of their Treasure. Let them apply to
 the Language, and "search the Scriptures"
 in the Original; but let them do it with as
 ready a Disposition to confirm, as to reverse;



entire Spirit of Christ, (as if in under pro-
 per Position, but very dangerous in the Ex-
 ecution) let it not be our Charge: Let
 it be the Charge of all our

Advertisement.

THE Profits arising from the Sale of this
 Sermon will be applied to a pious Use.
 — And shortly will be publish'd by the same
 Author, "An Enquiry into the Nature of
 "the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper;" the
 Profits of which will likewise be appropriated
 to the same Design.

